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Statement submitted by Gede Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

While acknowledging that the Millennium Development Goals have achieved several important objectives, the Foundation believes that sustainable development goals will gain traction and be effective if they:

(a) place a significant emphasis on the cross-cutting nature of the key challenges facing people living in extreme poverty in particular;

(b) avoid the silo-thinking and consequent narrow funding channels which sector-specific development targets can often accidentally encourage and institutionalise;

(c) encourage development agencies to evolve and strengthen genuine and long-lasting core competencies (as rigorously defined rather than, as is the case more often than not, lazily assumed), moving away from an over emphasis on Mission and Vision driven approaches to planning and implementation; and

(d) emphasise the need for development agencies to generate, where appropriate, high quality research related to the planning and implementation of poverty reduction initiatives. Perhaps for too long, many development agencies have relied on outdated 'second hand' research to plan and implement their initiatives and this has not helped to address the dynamic causes and impact of poverty.

We have worked with underserved and stigmatised health burdens in Nigeria since 2003 and are currently playing a lead role in:

(a) addressing, through peer reviewed research and policy evolution at the Government level, the links between HIV/AIDS and common mental disorders in order to ensure that care and support regimes are genuinely comprehensive and appropriate to those who need them;

(b) bringing together a wide range of development agencies to address the structural and practical issues related to the cross-cutting impact of common mental disorders (depression, substance abuse and suicidality) on education, health and livelihoods; and

(c) encouraging civil society organisations to reflect on the rigorously defined core competencies they are in the process of developing to ensure that all initiatives are well targeted and ultimately implemented with, and for the benefit of, those suffering from the impact of underserved and stigmatised health burdens. We believe that it is a model agency for the implementation of sustainable development goals.

We believe that the sustainable development goals represent an important opportunity for the Economic and Social Council, and the development community in general, to encourage not only an increasingly holistic approach to development challenges but for the goals themselves to be seen as opportunities to ensure that all relevant agencies are increasingly evidence based, inclusive and focused on structural and "immediate" challenges in their work. Without such an approach, the sustainable development goals run the risk of producing "results" which are uneven and fail to address the structural reasons and immediate manifestations of poverty.